CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of conducting of a survey process which comprises a plurality of steps, the
    method comprising:

5   defining a sequence of predetermined survey process steps to be used by a surveyor; in a first

        step, using a handheld computer that generates predetermined first prompts to guide the

        surveyor to enter reference data corresponding to the first prompts on the handheld computer;

        storing the entered reference data in the handheld computer using a handheld first database

        having a structure which is at least partially predetermined;

10   in a second step, generating second prompts to guide the surveyor to enter proposal data

        corresponding to the second prompts, and determining requirements for the retrieval of data

        from the first database;

        automatically retrieving selected reference data from the first database, at least partially

        according to requirements of the second step; and

15   storing the selected reference data and the proposal data in a second database for use in at least

        one further step of the method; and generating a first report including at least a portion of the

        selected reference data and the proposal data.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the first prompts relate for a store survey, to product size, product location, product contents and combinations thereof.

3. The method according to claim 1, wherein the first database stores the entered reference data in a hierarchical tree structure.

4. The method according to claim 3, wherein the tree structure includes a plurality of user-defined headings.

5. The method according to claim 1, wherein the first prompts include prompts for information on geographic data, retailer name, buyer contact information, and size of the retailer.

6. The method according to claim 1, the first report which is generated, including at least a portion of the reference data and the input information is compiled as a report on sales and provides a projection for future sales.

7. The method according to claim 6, wherein the second prompts are selected from prompts for information on the store location, store type and combinations thereof.

8. The method according to claim 7, wherein the second prompts are selected from prompts for information on the basic product details, the distributor, the product costs, the amount of inventory, details of the buyer, assumptions on sales.

9. The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of generating the second prompts comprises the step of guiding the surveyor to enter data corresponding to the second prompts, with the data being stored in the second database.

20

10. A method according to claim 1, including, in a third step, generating third prompts to guide the surveyor to enter result data corresponding to the third prompts and storing the entered result data in the second database together with data stored previously in the second database.

11. A method according to claim 10, wherein the third prompts include prompts for information on survey results corresponding to headings in the second database.

12. A method according to claim 10, including, in a fourth step, generating fourth prompts to guide the surveyor to select and/or enter report data corresponding to the fourth prompts for inclusion in a survey report.

13. The method according to claim 12, including generating a survey report comprising report data and data selected from the database, the survey report being compiled in a format which is at least partially predetermined by the customer of the database.

14. A *software* package for use in assisting in the conducting of a survey which comprises a plurality of steps, the *software* comprising:

a reference database module arranged to generate predetermined first prompts to guide the surveyor to enter reference data corresponding to the first prompts, and to store the entered reference data in a first database having a structure which is at least partially predetermined; a work database module arranged to generate predetermined second prompts to guide the surveyor to enter proposal data corresponding to the second prompts, to automatically retrieve selected reference data from the first database and to store the selected reference

21

data and the proposal data in a second database for re-use; and an interface module arranged

to extract selected data from the second database and to generate a first report comprising

the selected data and the proposal data, so that the first report has a format which is at least

partially determined by the structure of the second database.

5